


“Home is a notion that only the nations of the homeless fully appreciate and only the uprooted comprehend” (Stegner, 1971, P159)



## Introduction

Homelessness and offending behaviour are shown to be inextricably linked. For example, 75% of homeless services in England support clients with links to the Criminal Justice System (Homeless Link, 2011); 1/3 of offenders lose their home while in custody (Nacro, 2006). There is little research into the underlying reasons regarding why homelessness and offending are linked. This research examines possible psychological links between homelessness and offending, specifically examining The Big 5 Personality Factors (Costa and McCrea, 1985), Psychological Entitlement (Campbell et al, 2004) and Social Problem Solving (D’Zurilla et.al, 2001).

Constructive

Positive Problem Orientation (PPO)

Rational Problem Solving Style (RPS)

More likely to result in positive solution or to persist if outcome not achieved

Dysfunctional


Negative Problem Orientation (NPO)

Impulsivity/ Carelessness Style (ICS)

Avoidance Style (AS)

More likely to achieve negative outcome, no outcome or give up

Social Problem Solving Model



## Results

### Is there a link between psychological characteristics and homelessness?

T Tests showed offenders who were homeless had lower overall social problem solving ability ( $t(107)=-2.89, p=0.005$ ); lower rational problem solving ( $t(107)=-3.06, p=0.003$ ); and higher impulsive problem solving ( $t(107)=2.60, p=0.011$ ). There were no significant differences on other characteristics.

### Are psychological characteristics differentially linked to offence type?

Theft	Lower honesty, conscientiousness, openness, problem solving; higher impulsive & avoidance problem solving
Burglary	
Arson	Higher emotionality & avoidance problem solving
Drugs	Lower honesty
Sex Offences	Higher honesty problem solving, lower impulsive problem solving
Against Under 18	Higher honesty, agreeableness; lower impulsive problem solving

### Is there an interaction between homelessness and offence type?


Chi-squared tests showed that people with theft, burglary or arson offences, are more likely to be homeless, than those without these offences in their offending history.

### Offender perceptions of homelessness

Offending came before homelessness in the majority of the sample

Most commonly cited reasons for homelessness: offending, relationship breakdown, family/friends asked to leave.

Most commonly cited factors that could have prevented homelessness: not offending, better decision making, thinking about the consequences of offending, better perspective taking.



## Summary

Social problem solving ability was lower in homeless offenders than those who were not homeless.

Social problem solving ability was lower in people with Burglary, Theft and Arson convictions than those without these convictions.

Offenders with Burglary, Theft, and Arson convictions are more likely to find themselves homeless than those without these convictions.

## Implications

Improving social problem solving in offenders could decrease their chances of becoming homeless.

Social problem solving could be embedded into “Good Tenants” courses.

These could be offered as preventative measures by local authority and social housing providers to people on community sentences.

Shortfalls	Strengths
Violent offence is not included Male only participants Demand characteristics Reading ability and comprehension Not produced in alternative languages No comparison made with non-offenders	Lots of opportunity for future research Offers a new way of examining the link between offending and homelessness Offers a preventative intervention Includes under-researched acquisitive offenders